



Testimony of
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AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO

Labor & Public Employees Committee Public Hearing
February 27, 2014

HB 5257 An Act Concerning Hospital Employees and Hospital Conversions

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee. My name is Neil Alper and I am the AFT Connecticut Representative working directly with the four AFT Connecticut local unions within the ECHN network – the Rockville and Manchester Hospital Nurses, along with the Manchester Technical Staff and Service and Maintenance employees.

Since ECHN began its search for a larger partner, I have personally been in regular communication with my management counterparts to fully understand the Hospital's intentions in its RFP process. Even with the backdrop of a potential partnership with a for-profit entity, we've been able to successfully negotiate four collective bargaining agreements as well as maintain ongoing, detailed, and substantive dialogue regarding the larger financial concerns ECHN faces and the need to seek outside capital.

ECHN has acted in good faith to address the concerns of its workforce through its ongoing dialogue with AFT Connecticut and the concrete steps it's taken through the collective bargaining process. Our conversations, both formal, and informal are ongoing and extensive and are helping to inform both AFT leadership and members alike on the status of any potential merger.

Partnerships with for-profit healthcare corporations is one approach our smaller, more local providers are potentially seeking to survive in a rapidly changing industry. Certainly the potential for new capital they may provide is an attractive one to many of our struggling institutions.

In the absence of a working relationship such as the one between AFT and ECHN, a regulatory framework is essential to mitigate the upheaval for-profit entry into the Connecticut healthcare landscape may bring to hospital employees. Surely both union and non-union employees alike who provide the front line services at our hospitals deserve some level of transparency and protection as the landscape shifts under them. HB 5257 provides minimum protections to workers who are employed by hospitals who refuse to bargain in good faith or who lack union representation.

For these reasons, on behalf of our four AFT CT locals at ECHN, we ask you to act favorably on HB 5257. Thank you.